ITD Information Technology Department

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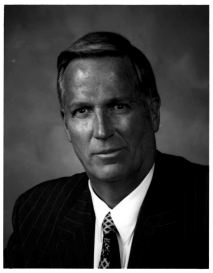

Wolfe Will Remain Chief Information Officer for North Dakota

Governor John Hoeven asked Curt Wolfe to serve as the Chief Information Officer for the State of North Dakota. Mr. Wolfe is looking forward to working with Governor Hoeven on the many technology initiatives currently underway and in ITD's budget for the next biennium. He is also looking forward to working with ITD employees as we strive to achieve the many goals we have set for the Information Technology Department. Congratulations Curt!

He has a bachelor's of science degree from the U.S. Airforce Academy. He lives with his wife, Nancy, in Bismarck.

In 1996, he sold his information technology consulting firm, Wolfe & Associates, Inc., and became president of their IT Division. As a consultant, he completed several studies for North Dakota, including a technology review of all state agencies for the Legislative Council.

Curtis Wolfe became the 17th member of Governor Schafer's cabinet on October 15, 1999.

New Plan Outlines Vision for Technology in North Dakota

Nancy Walz

On December 7, 2000, in conjunction with the governor's budget address, the Information Technology Department (ITD) released the statewide information technology plan outlining a vision for technology in North Dakota.

The plan identifies strategic goals and objectives for making North Dakota a player in the digital economy. Key initiatives to be addressed in the next two years include providing high-speed Internet access capabilities to 194 communities, expanding distance education and technology workforce development programs, and moving government services online.

"Infrastructure, workforce training, economic development and public policy are the four pillars that are essential to a successful statewide information technology strategy in this state," Curt Wolfe, the state's Chief Information Officer, said. "These are the areas we must focus on in terms of policy and resources to increase job opportunities and expand North Dakota's economy."

The plan identifies a number of collaborative efforts between state agencies to improve services while making efficient use of limited resources. These efforts include an enterprise resource planning system (ERP), a geographic information system (GIS), an electronic document management system (EDMS), and data warehouse tools.

A new enterprise resource planning system is planned to replace aging administrative systems in state government, higher education, and potentially K-12 school districts. The system will integrate financial, human resource, purchasing, asset management, and student information. The system will give students the ability to apply, register, and access student data via the Internet. These online services are critical to attracting students to North Dakota colleges and universities.

A centralized data repository of geographic information is planned to reduce the cost of acquiring and storing mapping information. Rather than each agency purchasing or developing mapping data, the information will be obtained once and shared among all agencies.

A number of state agencies are planning projects to reduce the cost of storing and processing paper by implementing electronic document management systems. Paper documents can be scanned and stored electronically, allowing access by multiple people at one time. The Information Technology Department plans to purchase the necessary hardware and software and make the service available to all state agencies in order to eliminate the cost of duplicate systems in multiple agencies.

All legislators and agency heads received a copy of the plan. It is also available on ITD's web site at http://www.state.nd.us/itd/planning/planhome.html.

A companion document showing graphs of the total state technology budget and summaries of agency technology plans is also available on the web. It lists the information technology goals, objectives, and activities along with anticipated spending for each agency.

Groupware: E-mail, Scheduling, and Beyond

Gary J. Vetter

By definition, groupware refers to any computer-related tool that improves the effectiveness of person-to-person processes. Simply put, it's software that helps us work together.

Until recently, most of ITD's groupware efforts have concentrated on providing an enterprise e-mail and scheduling system. However, the standardization of software within state government and the increased functionality of vendor products have positioned us to enter the next phase of groupware.

The groupware of tomorrow will include a suite of functionality that goes far beyond traditional e-mail and scheduling. It will consist of:

- Unified Messaging to provide anytime, anywhere access through any phone or other device to e-mail, voice mail, fax, and page messages.
- Instant Messaging to allow immediate, text-based messages to be sent to another user. Instant messaging has become a wide-scale communication phenomenon for Internet users and is poised to play a significant role as a business tool.
- Presence Information to enable one computer user to see whether another user is currently logged on. Presence information can be set to indicate a particular status (for example, out to lunch) or update automatically after a period of inactivity.
- Chat Services to provide a low-bandwidth, lightweight method of real-time communication between two or more people interested in a specific topic.
- Data Conferencing to allow dynamic, on-demand sharing of information through application sharing, discussion, file transfer, and whiteboard functionality.
- Audio-Video Conferencing to allow people to participate in traditional boardroom meetings without leaving their office.
- Workflow-tracking Applications to integrate business logic with e-mail and scheduling events. Examples include document approval and purchase orders.
- Knowledge Management Applications to capture, categorize, search, and share employee wisdom in a way that makes sense for the organization. Includes features for document versioning, profiling, check-in/out, security, and lifecycle management.

The benefits of these applications extend beyond the boundaries of any one agency. The challenge ahead is to implement groupware in a way that makes sense for everyone within ND State Government. Stay tuned!

ND Legislative Proceedings Available Live on the Internet

For the first time ever, we will be able to watch to live proceedings of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly. Audio and video from Senate and House floor proceedings will be available on the Internet at http://ndivn.nodak.edu/news&info.htm.

Legislative broadcasting will start Tuesday, January 9, when state legislators convene in a joint session to hear Governor John Hoeven's state of the state address at 1:15. Other noteworthy events to be carried the first week of the session include the state of the judiciary address by Chief Justice Gerald W. VandeWalle on Wednesday, January 10, at 1:00 and a Tribal/State relationship address on Thursday at 12:30.

The North Dakota Interactive Video Network and the Information Technology Department teamed with Bismarck-Mandan Community Access Television to make the broadcast available. Community Access Television had been broadcasting legislative proceedings on their local access channel for several sessions. Expanding the service to the Internet now provides us a chance to view the legislature firsthand.

Editor's Note: Audio of the ND House or Senate sessions, as well as the pilot of video access, will also be available from discovernd.com

ITD EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Name: Phil 'Boris' Miller
Job Title: Information Technology Business Analyst
Section of ITD: Information Technology Planning Services
Job Responsibilities: Facilitate the development and maintenance of IT policies, standards, and guidelines; review and approve state agency IT plans; participate in the development of the statewide IT plan; assist agencies in implementing best IT practices; and facilitate coordination with higher education and political subdivisions in coordinating information technology services.
Years at ITD: Started at ITD in April of 1998. Employed with the State of North Dakota for 27 years.

Tax Department EDMS Implementation

Bill Roach

Every spring the ND Tax Department processes a mountain of tax returns. In past years, processing 325,000 Individual Income Tax returns was a paper process involving dozens of temporary employees and hours of tedious and back-breaking work. And if that wasn't enough, a major sales and withholding tax deadline also occurs in April.

This year will be different. The Tax Department and ITD have partnered to implement an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) and forms processing solution. The solution will begin with processing Sales Tax returns on January 1, 2001. Individual Income Tax will start processing the second week of January 2001

FileNET's Panagon Content Services was selected as the EDMS software. Content Services provides the ability to store internal and external documents in a variety of formats to a central storage repository. Documents stored in the system can be accessed by authorized personnel using traditional workstations or via the web using a web browser.

Cardiff Teleform was selected as the forms processing solution. Teleform software uses Optical Character Recognition (OCR), Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR), Mark Sense Recognition (MSR), and Optical Barcode Recognition (OBR) to read and interpret machine print, hand print, and barcodes from forms completed by taxpayers. The software uses a validation toolset to verify the information captured from the form is correct. Any information that does not meet pre-defined confidence levels will be presented to a data input operator for verification.

Two Kodak 3520 DP production scanners will capture images of the tax forms. The scanners are rated for speeds of up to 160 images per minute while capturing both sides of the document. During scanning, the images are enhanced to improve image quality for both viewing and for forms processing. Indexing values for retrieving the information is extracted from the documents using the forms processing software and loaded with the images into the FileNET system.

The system is expected to provide numerous benefits to the Tax Department. Customer service will be greatly improved as the Individual Income Tax and Sales Tax returns will be available on the desktop. The need to store large quantities of paper documents in the basement of the Capitol building will be eliminated. The numbers of temporary staff required to support tax-processing operations will be greatly reduced. Data currently not available will be captured and used to improve enforcement activities.

While the Individual Income and Sales Tax are the first tax types to be processed in the new system, there are plans to add the other tax types in the near future. In addition, the Tax Department will be looking at improving the success of the automated forms processing software by improving the design of the tax forms. Registration marks, barcodes, constrained hand print, and dropout inks will be used to increase data recognition.

The FileNET and Cardiff products are also available for use by other agencies throughout state government. If you would like more information about either the technology or the Tax Department's application, please contact Bill Roach at 328-3589.

"Traditional government is based on physical boundaries. The new electronic government transcends boundaries and has forever transformed the way government customers access services."

Curtis Wolfe, North Dakota Chief Information Officer

Updated Methodology

Vern Welder

Several development groups within Software Development have been collaborating to review and update ITD's software development methodology. Our intent is to provide more defined quality assurance review on projects and we want to align our methodology with newer technologies we are using to develop and deploy applications. It should be available for review in mid-January 2001.

Project Management

Vern Welder

Software Development has recently decided to use project management as a performance measure. We currently perform project management, but do not collect and use historical data to determine how well we are actually doing. This process aligns with an update of our software development methodology and we plan to have this in place in February 2001.

INFORMATION LINK is published quarterly by the North Dakota Information Technology Department. Contact the editor if you are interested in contributing information or would like to be added to the mailing list.

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